

Appl. No. : 09/980,432
Filed : June 11, 2002

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed October 24, 2003, Applicant has amended the application as above. No new matter is added by the amendments as discussed below. Applicant respectfully requests the entry of the amendments and reconsideration of the application in view of the amendments and the remarks set forth below.

Discussion of Claim Amendments

Claims 86, 90, 101 and 104-145 have been cancelled. Claims 1-74 have been previously cancelled. Claims 84, 89 and 92 have been amended. Claim 146 has been added. Upon the entry of the amendments, Claims 75-85, 87-89, 91-100, 102-103 and 146 are pending in this application. The amendments to Claim 84 are merely made for clarification, and do not narrow the scope of protection. The amendments to Claim 89 are supported by, for example, original Claim 90. The amendments to Claim 92 are merely to rewrite the claim in independent form. New Claim 146 is supported, for example, by Figures 11 and 14 and their corresponding description. Therefore, the amendments to the claims do not introduce any new matter. Entry of the amendments is respectfully requested.

Discussion of Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner requested that a copy of the references indicated in PTO-1449, filed on March 5, 2002, be resubmitted due to being lost in the Patent Office. In reply, Applicant has submitted a copy of the IDS references excluding the three U.S. patents (5,742,377, 5,825,122 and 6,306,734) which are readily available to the Examiner. If the Examiner still requires copies of these patents, he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

Discussion of Objection of the Specification

In the Office Action, the specification was objected to because of the informalities regarding figure numbering. In reply, as discussed above, the specification has been amended as suggested by the Examiner. Withdrawal of the specification objection is respectfully requested.

Discussion of Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2

The Examiner has rejected Claims 84-86 and 101 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Applicant has assumed that Claim 85 has not been rejected by the

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Examiner and thus is allowable over the prior art of record. As discussed below, the rejected claims are now clear and definite. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

The Examiner asserts in connection with Claim 84 that there is insufficient antecedent basis for the term "the tip material." In reply, the term of Claim 84 has been amended to "a material of the tip" and now has proper antecedent basis.

The Examiner asserts that Claims 86 and 101 (Applicant assumed what the Examiner meant by Claim 103 was Claim 101) are indefinite because it is not clear what the limitation "chemical functional groups" in each of the claims represents. In order to expedite the prosecution of the application, Applicant has cancelled Claims 86 and 101, but believes that the term would be recognized by one who is skilled in the art.

Discussion of Patentability of Pending Claims

Claims 89, 91 and 93 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Derraa (U.S. Patent No. 6,017,772). Claims 75-83 and 87-88 have been allowed by the Examiner. The Examiner has also indicated that Claims 90, 92, 94-100 and 102-103 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Patentability of Independent Claim 89

Claim 89 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of Claim 90 (indicated to be allowable by the Examiner). Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that amended Claim 89 is allowable over the prior art of record.

Patentability of Independent Claim 92

Claim 92 has been rewritten in independent form. Thus, amended Claim 92 is allowable over the prior art of record.

Discussion of Patentability of Dependent Claims

Claims 91, 93-100 and 102-103 depend from base Claim 89, and further define additional technical features of the present invention. In view of the patentability of their base claim, and in further view of their additional technical features, the dependent claims are patentable over the prior art of record.

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Discussion of Patentability of New Claim 146

New Claim 146 depends from independent Claim 75, which has been allowed by the Examiner, and further defines additional technical features of the present invention. In view of the patentability of its base claim, and in further view of the additional technical features, new Claim 146 is patentable over the prior art of record. Furthermore, claim 146 is a more specific version of claim 84 and is clearly supported by Figures 11 and 14, and thus does not require a new prior art search.

Response to Examiner's Comments

Applicant wishes to respond to the comments on the claims made on pages 3-4 of the Action. Each claim is distinguished from the prior art in view of the entirety of its verbiage and not any particular language that has been noted by the Examiner.

CONCLUSION

In view of Applicant's amendments to the claims and specification, and the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any remaining concerns which might prevent the prompt allowance of the application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number appearing below.

Respectfully submitted,

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